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THE REGIONAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS  
OF MAY 1978\*

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## I

The nine Scottish Regional Councils created under the Local Government (Scotland) Act of 1972 constitute the upper tier of the two-tier system of local government in Scotland. The Regions are responsible for a variety of important local government functions including strategic planning, roads and transportation, industrial development, and the police, fire, education and social work services. Though they vary enormously in area, population and resources, the Regional authorities are all large and complex organisations whose performances importantly affect the daily lives of the people they govern.<sup>1</sup>

Regional councillors were first elected in 1974 and it would be fair to say that since then the Regional authorities have been the targets of a good deal of criticism. Generally the complaints have been that they are too large, remote from the ordinary elector, over-bureaucratized, cumbersome and inefficient. There exists quite a strong current of opinion that, in any future reorganisation of local government in Scotland—especially if the proposed Scottish Assembly becomes a reality—the Regions should be abolished. Indeed this is the declared policy of the Scottish National Party. Consequently, in addition to the normal sets of issues that might be found in local government elections, the second round of Regional elections held on 2 May 1978 was seen by many people as an opportunity for

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electors to pass judgment on the system as well as on the candidates and the parties.

The results of these elections — like the results of all elections — can be studied in a number of ways. The audience to which one is addressing oneself will determine the questions to be asked and hence the nature and depth of the analysis to be undertaken; at least three distinct if overlapping audiences can be identified. Firstly there are those interested in local government and particularly in the Regional Councils, local politicians, candidates, councillors and officials. With these in mind, we present a largely descriptive account of the results, comparing those of 1978 with those for the same authorities in 1974. Secondly, there are national politicians and political commentators who are less interested in the Regional elections *per se* and more concerned with what the results can tell them about trends in electoral opinion in Scotland. In this regard comparisons may be made not just with the last set of Regional elections but also with the last General Election, the District elections of 1977 and intervening by-elections. Finally, the results of the 1978 Regional elections will be of interest to academic political scientists concerned to test and develop hypotheses relating to parties, elections and voting behaviour. We devote relatively little attention to questions of more general academic interest, but we hope that this discussion and our comprehensive collection and analysis of the results which will be published later this year will act as a stimulus to our academic colleagues in this field<sup>2</sup>.

## II

In describing the Regional election results there are two major themes to consider — participation by candidates, parties and electors, and patterns of party support. We look at each of these in turn.

(i) *Participation: parties and candidates*

Perceived public apathy towards local elections — as manifested in low turnouts of voters — has long been deplored by public officials, newspaper editors, candidates, party organisers and so on. Less frequently commented upon, but just as surely an indicator of this apathy, has been the unwillingness of people to come forward as candidates and the inability of parties to

ensure that local elections are always contested. Uncontested elections have always been fairly common at local level but one of the hopes of the architects of the new structure of local government was that the existence of the larger and, on the face of it, more powerful local authorities, together with the payment of attendance allowances to councillors, would stimulate greater participation by both electors and parties.

In this respect the new Regional authorities got off to an encouraging start in 1974. Interest in the elections was high. Many more divisions were contested than had been the case under the old system and turnout, at 50.6 per cent, was relatively high. The 1978 election results suggest, however, that interest has declined somewhat.

If we consider first the percentage of divisions that were contested, over the whole country, this fell from 90.3% in 1974 to 79.1% in 1978.<sup>3</sup> As Table I shows, however, this decline was not uniform, being particularly marked in the Highland, Borders, Dumfries and Galloway and Tayside Regions. In Highland and Dumfries and Galloway fewer than half the divisions were contested in 1978. On the other hand, there were increases in the percentage of divisions contested in Strathclyde, Lothian and Central — and in the latter two cases every division was contested.

Table I

## PERCENTAGE OF DIVISIONS CONTESTED 1974 - 1978

	1974 %	1978 %	Change %
Highland	91.5	46.8	-44.7
Grampian	90.6	73.6	-17.0
Tayside	95.7	73.9	-21.8
Fife	83.3	81.0	- 2.3
Lothian	93.9	100.0	+ 6.1
Central	88.2	100.0	+11.8
Borders	91.3	56.5	-34.8
Strathclyde	97.1	99.0	+ 1.9
Dumfries & Galloway	65.7	42.9	-22.8
Scotland	90.3	79.1	-11.2

At first glance it would not appear to be the parties who are to be "blamed" for the overall decline in competitiveness. The decline is steepest in the Regions in which party competition

at local level is least developed and local politics is dominated by Independents. Indeed, as Table II shows, the number of major party candidates in these elections increased as compared with 1974. There was a slight decline in the number of Labour candidates but this was more than counterbalanced by a moderate increase in the number of Conservatives — indicative of the Conservative Party's still growing participation in Scottish local politics — and a substantial rise in the number of SNP candidates. The latter was particularly marked in Strathclyde, where they increased by 46, Lothian, where there was an increase of 21 and Tayside where the SNP contested the Regional election for the first time with 16 candidates. By contrast the number of Independent candidates fell sharply — by almost 50.0% — and declined in each of the nine Regions.

Table II

NUMBER OF CANDIDATES PUT FORWARD BY EACH PARTY  
1974 - 1978

	1974	1978	1974 - 78
Con	254	292	+ 37
Lab	303	284	- 20
Lib	83	37	- 46
SNP	126	225	+ 99
Comm	56	38	- 18
Ind	297	152	-143
Others	29	19	- 10
Total	1,148	1047	-101

More detailed analysis of the divisions which were contested in 1974 but not in 1978 corroborates the view that the increase in uncontested returns is mainly a consequence of reduced participation on the part of the Independents. In the 74 divisions which fall into this category, the Conservatives withdrew in 7, Labour in 16, the Liberals also in 16, the SNP in 10 and at least some Independents in 53. In 27 of the divisions it was only Independent candidates who withdrew.

The decline in participation by Independents might have a number of causes. In some areas where the parties have dominated, the Independents might have felt that the struggle against the party machines in elections was too unequal or that they were in an anomalous position in a council run on party

lines, and simply withdrawn. In others (for example, Grampian) at least some Independents have reacted to the realities of party-organised local politics by adopting a party label (usually Conservative). But these arguments do not explain the decline in the number of Independent candidates in the Highland Region (-29), Borders (-12) and Dumfries and Galloway (-25) where the parties are still weak. In these Regions — which are very large in area and small in population — it may be that the rewards and satisfactions of local government service are not great enough to outweigh the costs in time and effort. Travel alone for many councillors in the Highland Region, for example, must be a major disincentive.

(ii) *Participation: turnout*

Turnout in contested divisions in the Regional elections declined from 50.6% in 1974 to 44.6% in 1978. Table III presents turnout figures for each of the nine Regions and it can be seen that there was a decline in every case and that Regional deviations from the overall figure were not, on the whole, very great.

The largest decline was in the Grampian Region — a fall of 9.2% to 33.8%, by far the lowest turnout of any Region. Interestingly, the turnout in Grampian at the 1977 District elections was also the lowest in Scotland at 36.1%, but we can find no satisfactory explanation for the unusually low level of electors' participation in this part of the country.

Table III  
PERCENTAGE TURNOUT 1974 - 1978

	1974	1978	Change
	%	%	%
Highland	52.5	43.9	-8.6
Grampian	43.0	33.8	-9.2
Tayside	47.4	41.3	-6.1
Fife	49.9	46.3	-3.6
Lothian	51.0	43.8	-7.2
Central	57.7	50.4	-7.3
Borders	48.2	41.7	-6.5
Strathclyde	51.7	46.2	-5.5
Dumfries & Galloway	46.9	43.3	-3.6
Scotland	50.6	44.6	-6.0

A variety of hypotheses have been put forward to explain variations in turnout and in turnout change from one election to the next, involving variables such as the weather, the marginality of the electoral division, the choice of candidates, the social structure of the electorate and so on, but we do not have space to pursue these here. We can, however, test an hypothesis specific to these elections. This is that the increased participation by the SNP would lead to higher turnout. This would seem a reasonable hypothesis since intervention by the SNP increases the range of candidates and one would expect that at electoral division level it would lead to greater public awareness since it would mean more extensive advertising, canvassing and general activity. In order to test the hypothesis in a simple way we have isolated those divisions which were contested by the Conservatives and Labour alone of the major parties in both 1974 and 1978 (26 divisions) and those which were contested by the Conservatives and Labour in 1974 but in which the SNP intervened in 1978 (54 divisions). The mean change in turnout in the former group was -9.8%, while in the latter it was -3.5%. It would seem, then, that SNP intervention did have some effect in moderating the decline in turnout.

The overall turnout of 44.6% suggests a marked lack of interest in the Regional Councils on the part of the electorate and supports claims about their remoteness. Despite their greater powers, the Regional Councils had a lower turnout than the District Councils had for their elections in 1977 (47.8%). In only one Region did turnout in 1978 exceed 50% — but this was the case in 22 of the 53 Districts in 1977. After the initial flourish of enthusiasm in 1974 when the novelty of the new system may have quickened interest, and when both District and Regional elections were held on the same day, turnout at Regional level returned in 1978 to a level which is similar to that obtained under the old local government system.

(iii) *Patterns of Party Support: Votes*

For most people the level of participation in an election is a question of secondary importance. What really matters is who wins votes and seats. Table IV shows the distribution of votes amongst the parties at the 1974 and 1978 Regional elections over Scotland as a whole.

Table IV  
PERCENTAGE SHARE OF THE VOTES \*

	1974 %	1978 %	Change 1974-78 %
Con	28.6	30.3	+1.7
Lab	38.5	39.6	+1.1
Lib	5.1	2.4	-2.7
SNP	12.6	20.9	+8.3
Comm	1.0	0.5	-0.5
Ind	12.4	4.9	-7.5
Others	1.9	1.4	-0.5

\* Figures for each Region are given in the Reference Section at the end of the book.

Though these figures are clearly important and of considerable interest they must be interpreted with caution because of variations in candidatures at the two elections. As we have seen, there were many more SNP candidates in 1978 than in 1974 and fewer Independents. Further, there was an increase in the number of divisions that were not contested at all. Clearly these features complicate any analysis of voting trends. There were, for instance, 12 divisions which Labour took without opposition in 1974 (and were thus credited with no votes) but in which they were opposed in 1978 and gained almost 35,000 votes — more than 60% of the total in those divisions. On the other hand there were no SNP candidates in Tayside in 1974 but in 1978 their 16 candidates obtained almost 15,000 votes, 16.3% of the total. Despite the difficulties presented by changes of this kind, we clearly must consider the pattern of party support in these elections in some detail.

The Labour Party entered the 1978 elections very much on the defensive. The 1974 Regional elections had seen good results for Labour — they were clearly in control of Fife and Strathclyde and were the largest party in Central and Lothian. But those elections had been held at a time when the newly-elected Labour government was still in its "honeymoon" period with the electorate and was enjoying leads of the order of 15% in the national opinion polls. Following the General Election of October 1974, however, the Government became less

popular and in the second half of 1976 and throughout most of 1977 Labour trailed badly behind the Conservatives in the polls. In Scotland, Labour's unpopularity was reflected in a series of local government by-election losses and, most strikingly, in the loss of 129 seats in the District council elections in May 1977. In the last few months of 1977 and the first few months of 1978, however, Labour made a substantial recovery in the polls. They nonetheless entered the Regional elections still behind the Conservatives, according to national polls. In these circumstances Labour were generally expected to lose votes and seats as compared with 1974, even if not on the scale of their losses in 1977. But the outcome of the elections must have been a pleasant surprise even to Labour's most optimistic supporters. Despite putting forward slightly fewer candidates than in 1974 and despite a much more extensive challenge by the SNP, Labour increased its share of the vote to 39.6% of the total.

For the Conservatives too, the results of the elections must have been pleasing — if only moderately so. Following the General Election of October 1974 it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that the Conservatives would be fated to become permanently a third party in Scotland. In fact, however, they recovered a good deal in the 1977 District elections and in 1978 they increased their number of candidates and received a higher share of the vote than they had done in 1974 — putting them comfortably ahead of the SNP in terms of popular support.

A reading of the figures given in Table IV would suggest, on the face of it, that the SNP performed splendidly in these elections. They increased their share of the vote by 8.3% and were, indeed, the only party actually to increase the number of votes they received — from about 215,000 in 1974 to 313,000 in 1978. But these elections were a disappointment to the SNP. They had made a major advance in the 1977 District elections, gaining 107 seats and in 1978 they mounted a formidable challenge, increasing substantially the number of candidates they put forward. Before the elections, the SNP were said to be confident of winning a large number of seats in Strathclyde and of taking control of the Central region. In the event they did neither of these, and the increase in their votes is entirely due to the increased number of candidates put forward. This can be seen from the breakdown of the SNP votes given in Table

V. In divisions which they contested on both occasions the SNP vote declined, and more than half of their total in 1978 came in divisions which they had not contested in 1974.

Table V

## VOTES OBTAINED BY THE SNP 1974 AND 1978

	1974 Votes	1978 Votes
Divisions contested 1974 only (31)	20,164	—
Divisions contested 1974 and 1978 (94)	195,238	155,982
Divisions contested 1978 only (130)	—	157,037
<b>Total</b>	<b>215,502</b>	<b>313,019</b>

An unusual feature of the performance of the three major parties in these elections is that all of them increased their share of the votes cast. This is due to the decline in votes for Independent candidates from 12.4% in 1974 to 4.9% in 1978. In part this is a reflection of the decline in contested elections in areas where Independents would have obtained most of the votes. Thus, of the 92 seats won by Independents more than half (49) were taken without a contest compared with 17 out of 114 in 1974. In the Highland Region, for instance, Independents increased their number of seats won from 37 to 40 but largely because of uncontested returns their total vote fell from 44,000 to 24,000. In part also, the decline in Independent support reflects increasing domination of the Regional Councils by the political parties — a subject to which we return below. In the six most partisan regions (Grampian, Tayside, Fife, Lothian, Central and Strathclyde) Independent candidates fell from 112 to 34 and their share of the vote from 8.2% to 1.8% between the two elections.

A more accurate picture of the relative performance of the three major parties than is given in Table IV can be obtained from an analysis of those divisions in which the pattern of major party candidatures was the same in both 1974 and 1978. This avoids distortions due to variations in candidatures. Three types of contest are of interest, viz. Conservative v Labour, Labour v SNP, and Conservative v Labour v SNP. The table below shows the division of votes amongst the parties concerned in each of these three kinds of contest.

Table VI

## SHARE OF VOTES IN DIVISIONS WHERE MAJOR PARTY CANDIDATES WERE THE SAME IN BOTH ELECTIONS

(i) Con v Lab (36 Divisions)					
1974			1978		
Con	Lab		Con	Lab	
%	%		%	%	
56.7	43.3		58.0	42.0	
(ii) Lab v SNP (21 Divisions)					
1974			1978		
Lab	SNP		Lab	SNP	
%	%		%	%	
52.1	47.9		58.0	42.0	
(iii) Con v Lab v SNP (56 Divisions)					
1974			1978		
Con	Lab	SNP	Con	Lab	SNP
%	%	%	%	%	%
27.4	45.8	26.8	29.1	46.5	24.4

Taking each of these in turn, the first section of the table shows that there was in Con v Lab contests a slight movement from Labour to Conservative between the two elections — a swing of 1.3%. That there was such a movement is not surprising given the change in the two parties' fortunes in the national opinion polls between April 1974 and April 1978. What is surprising is how small the swing was.

In Labour v SNP contests, however, there is a clear and substantial swing from the SNP to Labour (5.9%). When it is remembered that 1974 had been a generally good performance by Labour, their improved position in straight fights with the SNP is a measure of the latter's poor showing.

Finally, where candidates of all three parties were present at both elections there was again a decline in the SNP's share of the three-party vote (−2.2%) while both the other parties improved, the Conservatives gaining slightly more than Labour (+1.7% to 0.7%).

Before we leave this discussion of the voting pattern in 1978 a few words should be said about the minor parties. Firstly, the Liberals are now clearly a very minor party in Scottish local politics. They gained only 2.4% of the votes. This was not

simply a reflection of a decline in the number of Liberal candidates. In four Edinburgh divisions, for instance, in which in both 1974 and 1978 Conservative, Labour and Liberal candidates were in competition, the Liberal share of votes dropped from 31.4% to 22.7% and in 6 divisions (3 in Edinburgh and 3 in Inverclyde) where the SNP intervened in 1978 the drop in the Liberal share of the vote (-10.3%) was much larger than that experienced by the other two parties (Conservative -0.2% and Labour -3.8%). Overall, it would seem that the outlook for the Liberals at this level is pretty bleak. The Scottish Labour Party had eight candidates in the field. But, as in 1977, it failed to make any impact. It won no seats and gained only 6,629 votes, almost 75% of these coming from two candidates in Cumnock and Doon Valley, the base of the party's leader, Jim Sillars, MP.

(iv) *Patterns of Party Support: Seats*

The analysis of voting returns is a fascinating business, but of more practical importance is the number of seats won. Parties and groups seek to win council seats in order to gain control of the authority and thus be able to implement their own distinctive policies. Table VII shows the number of seats won over the whole country in 1974 and 1978.

Table VII  
NUMBER OF SEATS WON \*

	1974	1978	Change 1974-78
Con	112	136	+24
Lab	172	174	+2
Lib	11	6	-5
SNP	18	18	0
Comm	1	1	0
Ind	114	92	-22
Other	4	4	0
	<hr/> 432	<hr/> 431	

(1 vacant)

\* Figures for each Region are shown in the Reference Section at the end of the book.

Labour remains the largest party in Scotland in terms of

Regional council seats. The Conservatives have, however, replaced Independents as the second largest "party". As we have noted, this is partly to be explained by former Independents now accepting a party label. Ten of the twenty-four Conservative "gains" were simply cases in which councillors who had been elected as Independents in 1974 presented themselves in 1978 as Conservatives. There were also, however, a number of cases of Conservative gains against Independent opposition. The overall impression of stability conveyed by Table VII is a little misleading because, of course, gains and losses can cancel each other out. In fact 68 seats changed hands between parties. This is 15.7% of the seats at stake and compared with 21.4% of the seats which changed hands in the District elections of 1977. The Regional election was, therefore, characterised by somewhat less instability than the Districts. The turnover of seats among the parties is shown in Table VIII. (For the purpose of this table we have ignored regional by-elections between 1974 and 1978).

Table VIII  
SEATS CHANGING HANDS

Losing Party	Winning Party						Total Losses
	Con	Lab	Lib	SNP	Ind	Other	
Con	—	2	—	2	3	1	8
Lab	3	—	—	3	3	—	9
Lib	2	—	—	—	4	—	6
SNP	3	6	—	—	—	1	10
Ind	23	3	1	4	—	1	32
Others	1	1	—	1	—	—	3
Total Gains	<hr/> 32	<hr/> 12	<hr/> 1	<hr/> 10	<hr/> 10	<hr/> 3	<hr/> 68

It can be seen that there was some cancelling out of gains and losses. The SNP, for instance, gained 10 seats but lost another 10 thus leaving them with the same number as in 1974. The commonest change was from Independent to Conservative, which we have already touched upon. There were six Conservative gains from Independents in Grampian, 5 in Dumfries and Galloway and 4 in Tayside. Interestingly, only 5 seats changed hands between the Conservatives and Labour.

All of this had important consequences for party control

of individual Regions. The situation in this respect after the 1974 elections and that after the 1978 elections is set out below. Labour now have clear control of all the Regions in the populous central belt while the Conservatives have added Tayside (which they previously controlled with the Independents) to Grampian.

	1974	1978
Independent Control	Highland Borders Dumfries & Galloway	Highland Borders Dumfries & Galloway
Labour Control	Fife Strathclyde	Fife Strathclyde Lothian Central
Conservative Control	Grampian	Grampian Tayside
No overall Control	Tayside (Con largest party) Lothian (Lab largest party) Central (Lab largest party)	

### III

#### *Trends in Electoral Support 1974-78*

In the national press and on television most comment on local election results is concerned with their implications as indicators of the general state of electoral opinion in the country. They are treated, not unreasonably, as super-opinion polls which give a reliable guide to the popularity of the various parties amongst voters. In this respect the 1978 Regional elections were particularly important because a General Election was expected later in the year. Interest was centred, of course, on the relative performance of the Conservatives, Labour and SNP and because of this, in what follows, we confine ourselves to election results in Strathclyde, Central, Lothian and Fife, for it is only in these Regions that there are enough candidatures by the three parties at local level to make for meaningful analysis. In any event these four Regions contain about 75% of the Scottish electorate and 51 of the 71 Scottish parliamentary constituencies.

The overall distribution of votes amongst the three parties

in these regions at the elections in 1974, 1977 and 1978 is given in Table IX. The message of the data is clear. The Conservatives effected a substantial recovery between 1974 and 1977 and they managed to improve on this a little between 1977 and 1978. Labour experienced a marked drop in popularity between the General Election and the District elections but by 1978 were roughly back at the level of support they had enjoyed in the October 1974 General Election — well ahead of the other two parties. The SNP on the other hand, after maintaining their 1974 level in 1977, dropped back considerably in 1978.

**Table IX**

#### THREE-PARTY SHARES OF THE VOTES (1974, 1977, 1978, Fife, Lothian, Central, Strathclyde)

	General Election 1974 (51 constituencies)	District Elections 1977 (675 wards)	Regional Elections 1978 (227 divisions)
	%	%	%
Con	24.4	30.6	31.3
Lab	44.3	38.2	44.9
SNP	31.3	31.3	23.9

Inevitably, the comparison of the District and Regional elections is complicated by variations in candidatures on the part of the three parties. There were, however, 46 Regional divisions in 1978 in which there were Conservative, Labour and SNP candidates and whose component District wards all had candidates of the three parties in 1977. A comparison of the performances of the three parties in these areas only at the two sets of elections generally confirms the pattern seen in Table IX.

**Table X**

#### THREE-PARTY SHARES OF THE VOTES 1977 AND 1978 (selected divisions)

	District Elections 1977 (104 wards)	Regional Elections 1978 (46 divisions)
	%	%
Con	35.0	33.9
Lab	32.7	43.8
SNP	32.3	22.4

Although the figures suggest in this case a slight fall in Conservative support, the Labour recovery and SNP decline are clearly confirmed.

To careful observers of Scottish electoral opinion this movement was not entirely unexpected. Following the October General Election, opinion polls in Scotland, which are undertaken and published monthly, showed the three parties running about even in terms of popular support.<sup>4</sup> From the middle of 1977, however, Labour's position, according to these polls, improved. This can be seen clearly in Table XI which shows the parties' standing in the polls throughout 1977 and 1978. While Conservative support remained fairly firm, SNP support tended to decline and Labour's to rise very steadily.

Table XI

## MEAN SHARE OF VOTE INTENTIONS IN SCOTLAND 1977-78

	Jan-April 1977	May-Aug 1977	Sept-Dec 1977	Jan-April 1978
	%	%	%	%
Con	29.8	28.8	29.3	27.8
Lab	28.0	30.5	34.0	39.5
SNP	32.8	32.5	28.3	26.3

Only three weeks before the Regional elections a firm indication was given in the parliamentary by-election in Glasgow Garscadden that the story being told by these polls was correct. This was the first Scottish by-election of the present Parliament and the SNP had gained all the District seats within the constituency in 1977, taking 44.6% of the three-party vote compared with 36.0% for Labour and 19.4% for the Conservatives. Yet in the by-election Labour held the seat comfortably, gaining 46.9% of the three-party vote compared with 34.0% for the SNP and 19.2% for the Conservatives.

How, then, is one to account for the resurgence of Labour support in Scotland? A variety of reasons have been suggested including the impending success of the Government's devolution bill, the unimpressive performance of SNP councillors at District level, and a tendency for the SNP to rest on its laurels and assume that victories would continue to come its way without undue effort. In our view the real explanation is more general than these. The movement of opinion in favour of Labour is not something peculiar to Scotland. Since mid-1977, national opinion polls have found the Government's standing with the electorate improving steadily. Gallup, for instance, in April-

June 1977 reported a Conservative lead over Labour averaging 15.5%. In April 1978 the Conservative lead was only 2%. Similarly, swings against the Government in by-elections have become smaller through 1977 and 1978 than they were previously. This suggests a more general return of confidence in the Government arising from such general factors as its overall handling of the economy, the electorate's perceptions of the performance of the Prime Minister and so on. Our view has always been that SNP voting has been, to a significant extent at least, a result of disappointment with the performance of governments of both major parties. When the Government was perceived as doing fairly well at least, then it was likely that SNP support would wane and that is what happened in 1978.

## IV

As a final comment upon the 1978 Regional elections we want to emphasise the increasingly partisan nature of politics at this level. Writing elsewhere about Scottish local politics we have discussed partisan and non-partisan styles of local politics and noted that the latter is declining.<sup>5</sup> According to our argument the non-partisan style is most likely to be found in small towns and villages electing local councils and we would expect therefore that the Regions would be more likely to be organised upon a partisan basis than the Districts. This is certainly the case. Only the three peripheral Regions of Highland, Borders, and Dumfries and Galloway can now be categorised as non-partisan. The six others are now firmly partisan. The change in these Regions between 1974 and 1978 is illustrated in Table XII.

Table XII

## INDEPENDENTS IN PARTISAN AND NON-PARTISAN REGIONS

	1974-78			
	Non-Partisan Regions (3)		Partisan Regions (6)	
	1974	1978	1974	1978
% Candidates Ind	69.3	71.9	12.7	3.9
% Votes Ind	79.1	74.3	9.5	4.3
% Seats Ind	69.2	71.5	7.9	1.8



As can be seen, Independents, from a position of some significance, have now been virtually eliminated in the six partisan Regions. On the other hand, the parties have made little progress in the non-partisan areas. In these the Independent tradition is resilient and looks likely to remain dominant for some time to come.

#### REFERENCES

1. The nine Regions are shown on the map of Scotland in the Reference section.
2. A comprehensive collection of the election results and a more extensive analysis will be published later in 1978 by the authors and will be available from them. The analysis undertaken in this paper must be regarded as preliminary since it is based upon results given in *The Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald* which have not yet been fully checked with the appropriate returning officers.
3. Throughout, we have ignored Division 31 in the Strathclyde Region in which the election was postponed due to the death of the incumbent Labour councillor and candidate, Geoff Shaw.
4. The polls are conducted by System Three (Scotland) Ltd. and published in the *Glasgow Herald*. See table in Reference section for the results of System Three Polls October 1974 - May 1978.
5. Drucker, H. M., and Clarke, M. G. (eds) *The Scottish Government Yearbook 1978* (Edinburgh, 1977), and Bochel, J. M., and Denver, D. T., *The Scottish District Elections 1977* (Dundee, Department of Political Science, University of Dundee, 1977).